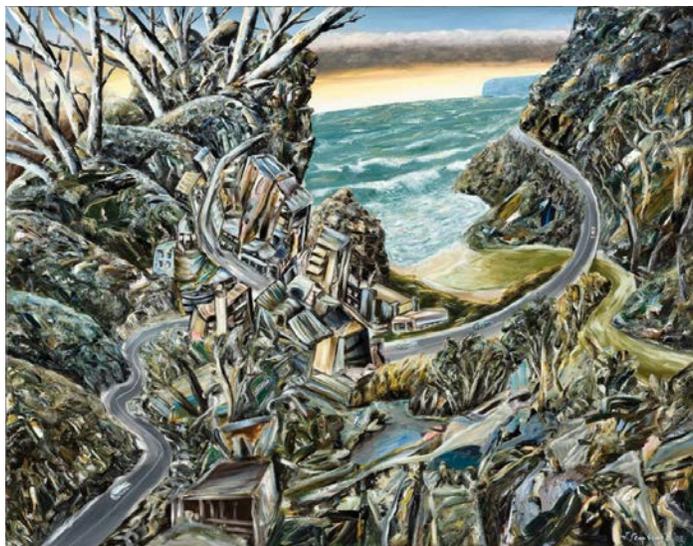


23 February 2016

NGV NEWS | Jan Senbergs: Observation–Imagination

The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia | 18 March – 12 June 2016 | Free entry



From the vast expanses of Antarctica to labyrinthine Melbourne cityscapes, more than five decades of artist Jan Senbergs' prolific oeuvre will be revealed in the major retrospective *Jan Senbergs: Observation–Imagination*.

The exhibition, Senbergs' first-ever comprehensive survey, will feature over 120 works including large-scale paintings, drawings and prints which depict sprawling aerial views of Australian cities, dystopic industrial landscapes, raging bushfires in the Victorian Otways, the remote deserts of north-Western Australia and more. The exhibition spans Senbergs' first exhibition in 1960 through to the present day, representing all periods of his career.

Recognised for his sheer visual inventiveness and sitting outside any defined artistic trend, Senbergs draws inspiration from a remarkably diverse range of influences; literature, history, architecture and non-Western art, and finds imagery within obscure technical journals, ancient mythology and illustrated encyclopedias.

Tony Ellwood, Director, NGV, said, 'As one of Australia's leading contemporary artists, Jan Senbergs is an extraordinary inventor of his own visual language, at once simple and bold. From lush landscapes to barren urban spaces, his body of work signifies an artist who has continually experimented with shape, form and motif, and one who to this day continues to push his art in new and unexpected directions. The NGV is pleased to present the first major retrospective of Jan Senbergs' work and offer visitors the opportunity to experience the full spectrum and constant evolution of his career.'

Senbergs, born in 1939 in Latvia, moved to Melbourne in 1950 following the end of World War II. Among other honours, he represented Australia at the prestigious 12th São Paulo Biennial in 1973 and was appointed to the Visiting Chair in Australian Studies at Harvard University in 1989, the first artist to hold this illustrious post.

Observation–Imagination will include key works from Senbergs' most important and critically acclaimed series including his 1973 São Paulo Biennial paintings, the *Copperopolis – Mt Lyell* mining landscape series, 1983, and his immense multi-panelled studio drawings of 1993-95.

Senbergs' *Antarctica* series is considered one of the most significant artistic responses to the continent. In 1987, Senbergs spent six weeks with the Australian Antarctic Division, travelling with fellow artists Bea Maddock and John Caldwell, on an annual resupply mission. *Observation–Imagination* will include key works such as his epic landscapes *Mawson* and *Davis*.

The exhibition will also present Senbergs' epic, 4.6 metre long *Pulaski Skyway* painting, which reflects the post-industrial landscape of the five and a half kilometre freeway that crosses the wasteland of western New Jersey from Newark to Jersey City. In this, Senbergs found a metaphor for the American experience and its splendour and decay.

More recently Senbergs has produced intricate labyrinthine views of cities, combining memory and imagination, and the exhibition will include map-like images of Melbourne, Sydney, Geelong, Wollongong and Port Kembla. The

-continues-

exhibition will also feature works from Senbergs' recent 2014 Victorian bushfire series, which burst with visual drama and chromatic brilliance.

Senbergs often refers to himself as a scavenger and collector of imagery taken from a wide variety of sources, and *Observation–Imagination* will include an enormous showcase, created by the artist, filled with cut-outs, photographs and personal artefacts that reference the people, places and artworks which have fuelled his visual imagination.

A range of public programs including talks by curators, writers and arts practitioners will provide visitors with insights into Senbergs' artwork and creative practice, beginning with a special opening weekend conversation between Senbergs and eminent art historian Patrick McCaughey on Sunday 20 March 2016 at 2pm. Book through ngv.vic.gov.au

The exhibition is accompanied by a generously illustrated 176-page volume, featuring insightful texts by exhibition curator Elena Taylor, Tony Ellwood, David Hansen and Patrick McCaughey. Available for \$39.95 from the NGV design store.

Jan Senbergs: Observation–Imagination is on display at The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia from 18 March – 12 June 2016. Open daily, 10am–5pm. **Free entry.**

-ends-

Media contact:

Elisabeth Alexander, Media and Public Affairs | 03 8620 2347 | 0439 348 357 | elisabeth.alexander@ngv.vic.gov.au

Image caption: Jan Senbergs, born Latvia 1939, arrived Australia 1950, *Coastal settlement*, 2009, synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 169.0 x 216.0 cm, Private collection, Melbourne, © Jan Senbergs